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EPA plans to vast perchlorate testing for Colorado River

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LAS VEGAS SUN

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency plans to test the waters of the Colorado River all the way to the Mexican border for perchlorate, the rocket fuel booster found in Las Vegas Valley drinking water.

Health effects from perchlorate in drinking water are unknown at this time.

While studies of health effects from the chemical in rats continue, the EPA plans to sample river water after Arizona Indian tribes brought their concerns to a three-day conference that ended in Henderson Thursday.

The Fort Yuma Indian Reservation at the U.S.-Mexican border urged further tests after perchlorate was discovered in Southern California and Southern Nevada drinking water last year.

Kevin Mayer, EPA's perchlorate project manager in San Francisco, said the water tests could be completed while health impact studies continue.

If perchlorate is not a health threat, the EPA may not regulate it despite the fact it is listed as a candidate for regulation.

If scientists discover the chemical is a threat to human health, it will take roughly a year to issue a health advisory.

The chemical battles iodine in the thyroid and can slow the gland's activity. Doctors treated patients with over-active thyroids with doses of potassium perchlorate in the 1950s.

Scientists are trying to find out if perchlorate flows to infants through breast milk, whether it affects bone marrow, contributes to lesions on the endangered razorback sucker fish or migratory bird reproduction in Lake Mead.

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